

Individuals with Autism on the Job



Sonja Chatfield
NE Region ASD Coordinator
schatfield@esu7.org
ASD Network Website:
www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/

Presentation Overview

- Characteristics of ASD
- Learning Characteristic
- Strategies for Success on the Job

"If you've seen one individual with Asperger's Syndrome or autism, you have seen one individual with Asperger's Syndrome or autism."

Brenda Smith Myles (U. KS.)
November 14, 2000



Prevalence

The incidence of autism is increasing nationally

- In December, 2012 The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) released a new report. It states that 1 in every 54 boys in the US is affected by autism -- and 1 in every 88 children has an autism spectrum disorder.
- Nebraska school verifications are no exception:
 - 1997-98: 240 children with autism
 - 2009-2010: 1947 children with autism
 - 2011-2012 = 2386 Students with a Primary Verification of Autism

In Nebraska...

...medical diagnosis and educational verification are separate processes:

A **medical diagnosis** is determined via the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual IV-TR for Pervasive Developmental Disorders

Verification is the process conducted by a school district to determine if a student has a disability that affects their education, and to plan appropriate educational services. The verification will reflect assessments completed by a multidisciplinary team (MDT)

Definition of Autism

- Autism is a complex, developmental disability that is evident within the first 3 years of life.
- It is a behaviorally defined syndrome that is recognized by difficulties in communication, social interaction and perceptual organization.
- Symptoms vary in degree of severity, from mild to severe impairments.

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Impairments in Social Interaction

- Impairments in:
 - Use of multiple nonverbal behaviors
 - Peer relationships
 - Spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment
 - Social or emotional reciprocity

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Impairments in Communication

- Impairments in:
 - Delay in, or total lack of, spoken language
 - Ability to initiate or sustain a conversation
 - Stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language
 - Nonfunctional repeating of words
 - Pitch, rate, intonation, rhythm, or stress
 - Comprehension of language
 - Make-believe play

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Impairments in Stereotyped Behaviors

- Evidenced by:
 - Encompassing preoccupation
 - Inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals
 - Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms
 - Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects

There is comfort in routine and "sameness"

Favorite areas of interest may be highly motivating

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Big Bang Theory - Sheldon's Sitting Spot

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Other Characteristics of ASD

Also shared by other disabilities

- Sensory Processing & Movement
 - Hyper-sensitive (over reactive)
 - Hypo-sensitive (under reactive)
 - Spatial positioning in space
 - Motor Planning
- Executive function
 - Difficulty organizing and handling multiple tasks
 - Difficulty with transition and change
- Processing speed

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Additional Characteristics of ASD

- Anxiety and stress
- Problematic behavior
 - Impulsive, with lack of judgment
 - Social "rule" understanding difficult
 - Act without fear (no interpretation)
 - Communicative function

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Questions?




www.corbis.com

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How to Support Individuals with ASD in the Job Setting



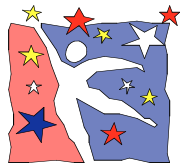
Team Work

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Possible Strengths of Individuals with Autism

- Ability to focus on one subject
- Attention to details
- Ability to view life from a different perspective
- Artistic ability
- Musical ability
- Mathematical ability
- Analytical ability
- Specific-to-general thinking



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Job Selection...Job Success


Knowing about specific learning characteristics of individuals with autism when selecting appropriate jobs will lead to further success ON the job.

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Learning Characteristics of Autism

- Visual vs. Auditory Learning
- Sequencing Problems
- Difficulty in Reading Social Information
- Concrete vs. Abstract Learning
- Sensorimotor Learning Difficulties





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Visual vs. Auditory Learning


- People with autism tend to be better visual learners than auditory learners
- In the average setting, approximately 89% of all information is transmitted through the auditory mode
- Whenever possible, communication/information should be transmitted using more than one method of communication

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Sequencing Difficulties



- People with autism have difficulty predicting what will come next in time, and reacting to it appropriately
- It is a myth that people with autism cannot handle changes in their routine/schedule
- The critical element is the ability to PREDICT these changes

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Concrete (often visual) schedules may address this problem.

Types of scheduling systems:







- object
- picture
- written
- combination of the above



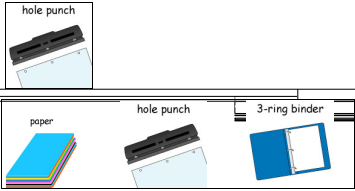
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OFFICE TASKS

Judy	Karen	Dawna
		
copier 	collate 	stapler 

Visual Sequence




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Difficulties in Reading Social Information

- Reading social information allows us to know what is expected of us in different environments and situations
- Persons with autism have difficulty recognizing and interpreting social cues, such as facial expressions and body language



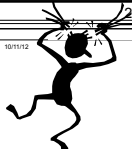
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- This may also contribute to engaging in socially inappropriate behavior and conversation

SOLUTION: Provide clear cues explaining expected behavior in given situations (provide clear expectations)



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Concrete vs. Abstract Learning

- People with autism often are better at learning concrete (as opposed to abstract) concepts/behaviors. Therefore, instruction should:
 - occur in natural settings and times
 - emphasize training in functional living skills
 - plan for generalization by providing opportunities to practice skills in a variety of settings



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Key Concepts for Employment

- Break new job skills down into steps (Task Analysis)
- Provide appropriate prompts
- Consider reinforcement
- Error Correction

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Task Analysis

- Helps workers to learn specific steps of a task
- Break task into steps
- Teach worker each step separately
- Have checklist for steps to complete or use picture schedule
- Can be done for any task

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Visual Schedule for Making a Pizza Based on Task Analysis



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Prompting

- Reminders for an individual about specific steps of a task
- Allows for more independence
- Helps person to learn existing skills better
- Only use prompts when needed
- Test, teach, practice, fade

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Types of Prompts

- Traditional
 - Verbal
 - Gesture - Combination
 - Modeling
 - Physical
- Natural
 - Partial Participation

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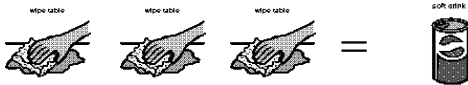
Reinforcement

- Know the individual's interests and preferences
- Only reinforce when job completed correctly
- Immediate reinforcement for a good job
- Keep praise meaningful and sincere

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Reinforcement Schedule



The diagram shows three hands wiping a table, followed by an equals sign, and then a can of soft drink, representing a reinforcement schedule where a specific task is followed by a reward.

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Reinforcement

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Error Correction

- Stop the error immediately
- Return to the last correct part of the task sequence
- Have person repeat the sequence with assistance
- Continue until the task is performed error free
- If errors continue, consider alternative strategies to teach that specific part of the task.

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Additional Strategies and Techniques

- Visual supports
 - Daily schedules of job tasks
 - Lists and color coding
 - Videotape of tasks
 - Pictures of tasks or end result
- Social Stories
 - brief story of work related rules, job tasks, or social interactions on the job

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Keys to Success on the Job

- Clear expectations
- Individualized instruction and training
- Support from job coaches and co-workers
- Performance evaluation and goal setting done by a collaborative team
- Adaptation of the work environment, hours or job tasks

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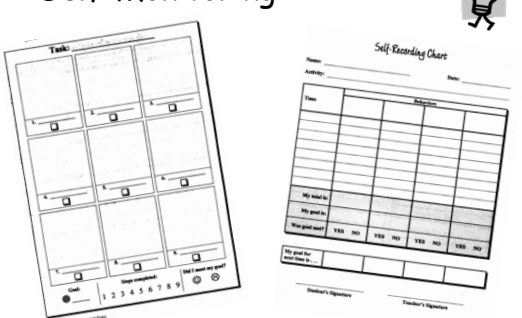
Additional Strategies and Techniques

- Structure the work environment
 - environment, person, task
- Provide natural supports
 - Decision making, choices, problem solving, safety, focus attention
- Consider possible sensory issues
 - Lighting, noise, crowd level, fidget toys, scheduled breaks

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Self-Monitoring



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Positive Outcomes for the Job Site


- Employees with autism have opportunities to learn appropriate behaviors from co-workers
- Development of understanding of autism by co-workers
- Increased self-esteem for all workers

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erFrlz9HNMg>

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What kind of jobs work well?



- Good job match
- Clearly defined work task and work area
- Supports in place
- Predictable (not necessarily repetitious)
- Receptive employer and coworkers
- *Review Resource Handbook on Autism and Employment

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Additional Resources

- Autism Internet Modules: Preparing Individuals with ASD for Employment
<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>
- Adults, Autism and Employment Guide
<http://www.dps.missouri.edu/Autism/Adult%20Autism%20&%20Employment.pdf>

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FAQ'S

Question: How can I help an individual with autism think positively about their ability to work?

- **Answer:** In general, individuals with ASD have many of the following assets that they can bring to the workplace. Accuracy in **visual perception** may be beneficial to individuals doing work that requires a lot of attention to detail or precision, such as technical work, clock repair or even filing.

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- Being able to **concentrate on tasks** for long periods of time is definitely an asset in many work situations. **Long-term memory**, especially for **details** is also helpful for jobs that require building on background knowledge to complete tasks such as installing computer software or hardware, or being a reference librarian. Some characteristics such as **special interests** and a **desire for routine and predictability** can be both **assets and liabilities** given the job setting.

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FAQ'S

Question: What can a job coach do to help a worker with ASD on the job?

- **Answer:** In supported employment, the job coach provides **one-on-one training** to an individual on the job, until that individual is able to complete tasks to the employer's satisfaction. The coach may also help the worker with ASD **understand the work culture** and the **hidden rules** that the worker does not understand. The job coach may also help **with creating written or graphic work schedules** and help with work organization and work flow.

Questions?

